Dear Friends

These winter holidays feel a little chillier than most, and certainly less tranquil, coming on the heels of an election that has left our country divided. While its aftermath has revealed that we as a nation have much work to do to educate against hatred and bigotry, this election also brought us an increased awareness of the plight of those struggling with deep poverty in our country and how desperately they are searching for hope and help. The year 2016 is one that has brought us to full attention.

For CWG the year 2016 is significant in another way: we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Opportunity Center. More than 10 years ago, a group of people came together to deliver homes and hope to the poor in our own community. For a full decade, our supporters have offered a haven for those who struggle most, providing 88 truly affordable homes, as well as food, clothing, and a safe place to take a shower or sit and rest, along with access to health care, case management, counseling services...

See “President’s Message”, page 2

Grateful for Hope and Home

When Mae moved into an apartment at the Opportunity Center more than eight years ago, she was taking the final step in her nearly two-decade-long journey away from homelessness and addiction.

Mae was born in Santa Cruz and moved to East Palo Alto with her family when she was a young teenager. A few years later, Mae’s father died, leaving her disabled mother to care for Mae and her siblings as best she could.

See “Mae”, page 3

Inside… The Beginning of CWG Your Gift Can Transform a Life Think Socks!
Like so many good stories, CWG’s begins with a storm! El Niño rains flooded our community’s local homeless drop-in center in 1998, and a group came together to share ideas and resources to create the Opportunity Center, the first permanent supportive housing complex in Santa Clara County. Thus began Community Working Group.

As we look back at a decade of providing homes and hope for men, women, and children in our community, we are excited to share details about this highly effective affordable home model! Look for more stories to come in future months about the Opportunity Center, the partners who brought it to reality, and the clients who have taken the opportunities offered there and transformed their lives and futures.

If you have already shared your email address with us, thank you! If not, please consider doing so now, so you will be among the first to know about upcoming Opportunity Center 10th anniversary celebrations and tours, CWG news, and other important updates! Visit communityworkinggroup.org/keep-in-touch.

“Home is a stable place so my kids can go to school, and so we can vote!” — Juliet

and career coaching.

Together we are making steady and significant progress, helping to decrease homelessness in Palo Alto by nearly 40% in the decade since the Opportunity Center’s inception. A decade of transformation with real and tangible results — that is something worth celebrating!

But in the wake of the election, I realize that CWG has something more to celebrate. We have a community of supporters who share the values that drive us as an organization: Empathy. Compassion. A belief that our community is only as strong as those who struggle most. A conviction that the American Dream — the ethos that all should have opportunity regardless of their socioeconomic circumstances or personal backgrounds — is worth working toward.

For more than a decade, we have shown our neighbors — whoever they are and whatever their circumstances — that they matter. In so doing, we have helped men and women to transform their lives and their children’s futures.

So as I consider what our small group of volunteers and supporters has accomplished together in a decade, I am grateful and inspired. I look to the future with optimism, hopeful for our clients, our community, and the nation we will work to shape together.

Thank you for your caring support.

John Barton
President, Board of Directors
Community Working Group
Please consider a gift to CWG today! We work efficiently, leveraging resources and community expertise so that every dollar we raise can stretch as far as possible to provide affordable homes and services to individuals and families in our community. Please don’t wait; we need your help to achieve our vision of a community in which everyone lives in a safe and stable home.

Please check your mail for our appeal letter, or visit our website to donate online at communityworkinggroup.org/donate. While you’re there, don’t forget to watch our new video, to hear from our clients about the transformations you are making possible every day!

“Home means time and energy to grow and dream.”
— Pam

MAE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

It wasn’t until Mae moved out of the family home in her mid-20s that she began using drugs. Soon she was addicted and found herself living on the streets of East Palo Alto. “I didn’t think anybody cared,” she said. “[I had] nowhere to sleep, nowhere to go; [I was] laying my head wherever I could find a spot to lay.”

Mae struggled with addiction for many years before quitting in December 2004. Still without a home, she frequently went to the homeless drop-in center to use the showers and the laundry. When the Opportunity Center opened, Mae put the final pieces of her transformation together. At the Opportunity Center Mae found a safe place to rest and recover, a supportive community, including a caring and professional case manager — and finally, a home.

Now, after completing her shift at her long-term job, Mae returns home to enjoy simple meals, music and movies. During holidays, she travels to spend time with her siblings and nieces in other California cities.

“T’m not homeless anymore, and I love it,” said Mae. “If it wasn’t for the Opportunity Center, I would still be out there on the streets.”

Thank you to Mae for sharing her story with us! Mae and two other Opportunity Center clients are featured in Community Working Group’s new video, produced to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Opportunity Center. Please visit our website communityworkinggroup.org to watch the short film.
When taking steps toward a brighter future, it helps to have healthy feet! Please consider a gift of new socks to help an Opportunity Center client this winter!

For an individual experiencing homelessness, such as the drop-in clients served through the Opportunity Center, some good, clean socks can help keep feet healthy and avoid painful and costly medical problems. (Clients are able to wash clothes at the Opportunity Center.) Seamless or moisture-wicking socks are especially helpful, but any new socks would be greatly appreciated! Donations can be dropped off at the Opportunity Center, 33 Encina Avenue, Palo Alto, between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. (If you would like a donation receipt, please ask the desk staff.) If you have questions, please call 650-853-8672.